



Project Team

Congestion Relief & Bus Rapid Transit Projects

APPENDIX Y6

DRAFT KIRKLAND: I-405 CONSTRUCTION COMMUNICATIONS

I-405, SR520 to SR522 Stage 1 (Kirkland Stage 1)

Draft RFP
March 22, 2005



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**



DRAFT Kirkland: I-405 Construction Communications

Crews working for the Washington State Department of Transportation and Sound Transit will complete two construction projects to improve I-405 in Kirkland in the next few years:

I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station

Buses, vanpools and carpools traveling between the I-405 high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and the Kingsgate Park and Ride have to merge through four lanes of freeway traffic at the already-crowded NE 124th Street interchange. Sound Transit and WSDOT will build direct access ramps at NE 128th Street in Kirkland to carry HOVs over traffic and directly into HOV lanes. This will provide faster, safer and more reliable service for transit buses and other HOVs and will eliminate the need to weave through freeway traffic.

- provides improved access for buses, carpools and vanpools
- extends NE 128th Street across I-405, provides Kirkland drivers a new east-west route over I-405
- freeway mainline, ramps, carpool lane and city street closures required
- construction July 2005 through winter 2007
- some noise and traffic disruptions expected

I-405 Kirkland Widening Project

We will improve I-405 between State Route (SR) 520 and SR 522 by adding one new northbound lane between NE 70th Street to NE 124th Street and one new southbound lane between SR 522 and SR 520.

- reduces congestion through the Kirkland Crawl for traffic on the mainline and HOV lanes
- complements the Sound Transit I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station Project (see above)
- rebuilds the 116th Street interchange
- freeway mainline, carpool lane and city street overpasses closures expected

Communications objectives

Reinforce the fact that these projects are a smart investment

- Provide information about the benefits these projects will provide to drivers, businesses, the environment, commuters, etc.
- Show that these projects support broader, longer-term plans to improve transportation on I-405 and the Eastside and in the region and state.

Prevent surprises

- Anticipate the unique needs of drivers, commuters, neighbors, policy makers, businesses and others
- Provide relevant, timely information to help them make decisions and weather unavoidable inconveniences

Prove that we are accountable and responsive

- Communicate project information and messages in ways that show we are coordinating and cooperating extensively
- Tell people which agencies are responsible for these projects
- Consider concerns and suggestions from neighbors, drivers and businesses; implement those that are feasible; and close the loop by letting them know how we're responding
- Don't fight public perception that these projects are essentially one
- Minimize disruption whenever feasible, for example, maintain access to nearby businesses and residences whenever possible, avoid disrupting traffic whenever possible, and minimize noise
- Report our progress and budget status frequently and in a straightforward manner
- Respond to inquiries in a timely manner and provide complete, relevant and understandable information
- Encourage people to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, bicycle, walk, flex their work schedules, work from home, etc. and support transportation demand management programs

Communications strategies

Coordinated communication

The distance between these construction projects is less than 1,000 feet. Coordinated communications will help maintain credibility, accuracy, and consistency; reinforce WSDOT and Sound Transit's key messages; and make the most of our resources. It also amplifies the power of our communication efforts. Coordinating key messages (project benefits, efforts to minimize construction disturbances for neighbors and drivers, public accountability) reinforce this effort.

We know that the public has no way of discriminating between project lines. The public will see these two projects as one. All materials will include parallel messaging and will utilize WSDOT and/or Sound Transit's agency existing messages, standards, look and feel, and brand.

Personalized outreach to affected groups

In addition to outreach to the media and general public, we'll identify groups that have a particular interest in these projects or are most affected by construction. Together with Sound Transit, we will conduct early, face-to-face outreach to these groups, including meetings with neighborhood associations, retirement homes, Chambers of Commerce, citizen advisory Committees, and other special interest groups and service providers. We'll put ourselves in their shoes and work to provide the information that's most relevant to them in ways that are convenient for them.

Exceed communications expectations

WSDOT and Sound Transit's experience developing successful communications strategies for direct access ramps on I-405 in Bellevue and on I-5 at S. 317th St. in Federal Way provide a good model for the current effort. We'll anticipate the need for information and deliver the right information to the right people using the right method at the right time. We'll leverage existing relationships with the community, policymakers and media to conduct effective outreach.

Two types of outreach: early awareness and construction specifics

Both types of outreach include information that reinforces broader WSDOT and Sound Transit messaging.

Early awareness

Some of this work is already underway and will continue through construction. This outreach includes:

- information about both construction projects, including transportation demand management and maintenance of traffic
- personalized outreach
- general information about the project designs and coordination with fewer specifics about construction
- relationship building with audiences who need time to adjust to our construction plans or are directly affected, including neighborhoods, businesses, transit agencies, emergency response providers, etc.
- interactive exchanges; because we're talking with these groups early we'll be able to consider their ideas and suggestions and tap into their networks and expertise, as is occurring with the Kirkland Advisory Committee

Construction specifics

- unified messages—once the I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station project starts construction the community will simply see construction on I-405 and will most likely see no difference between the projects
- even when each project provides specific details, including construction activities and affects, communications tools can be shared
- provides detailed information about the projects, construction, and construction affects to the public via one source whenever possible; at a minimum consistently mention or link to other projects
- construction information is less interactive and more informational than overall awareness information
- continue to reach both the early awareness audiences and the broader audience, including drivers, who learn about the projects as construction proceeds
- reinforce transportation demand management messages by encouraging drivers to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, work from home, flex their work schedule, bicycle, walk, etc.

Key audiences

- commuters, including weekend commuters
- out of area visitors
- local shoppers and visitors
- downtown Kirkland and Totem Lake businesses
- other cities
- nearby residents
- truck drivers and dispatchers
- elected officials and other policy makers
- transit agencies
- transportation management associations
- employee transportation coordinators
- neighborhood groups
- nearby hospitals and health care organizations
- nearby schools and churches
- WSDOT staff
- Sound Transit Staff
- Kirkland city staff

Key messages

- The Kirkland I-405 projects will deliver faster, safer and more reliable travel for Eastside motorists; particularly those who take buses, carpools and vanpools
- WSDOT, Sound Transit, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration are delivering these highly coordinated projects
- We are committed to delivering these important Eastside projects on time and within budget
- We are getting in, getting the work done, and getting out as quickly as possible. We'll work nights and weekends and take many other steps to get the work done quickly and minimize disruption
- These important projects fit into overall plans to fix major chokepoints and improve I-405, other state and regional highways, and transit

Supporting messages

Overall project benefits

- This is the kind of project people are calling for: a coordinated effort among agencies that will deliver faster, safer and better commutes
- This is an important regional project that will improve the speed and reliability of transit, carpools and vanpools on the Eastside and eliminate one of the worst congestion chokepoints along the I-405 corridor, the Kirkland Crawl
- The new ramps and lanes will reduce merging and weaving at freeway exits and on ramps, improving traffic flow and safety for all drivers
- These I-405 projects are essential for our economy, jobs and moving freight. I-405 moves nearly 800,000 people a day and carries twice the amount of freight shipped through the Port of Seattle

I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station specific project benefits

- Will carry buses, carpools and vanpools over traffic and directly into HOV lanes. This will provide faster, safer and more reliable service for transit buses and other HOVs
- Improves safety and reduces congestion by eliminating weaving and merging caused by drivers trying to get in and out of the HOV lane

I-405 Kirkland Nickel Project specific project benefits

- Shortens traffic congestion periods in the Kirkland area; improves one of the worst congestion chokepoints along the I-405 corridor, the Kirkland Crawl
- Increases travel speeds during rush hours
- Makes it easier to move freight
- Improves flow through the NW 116th interchange
- Makes it easier and safer to merge from the off-ramps at NW 85th Street
- Improves water quality and helps endangered salmon by treating freeway run-off
- Improves fish passage on Forbes Creek
- Installs five new noise walls and upgrades or relocates four noise walls to help those who are nearest the freeway in the project area
- Improves safety by improving the flow of traffic, signage, pedestrian connections and pavement markings/striping; even more important because there are several high-accident locations in this project area
- Improves aesthetics using context sensitive solutions design principals
- Project benefits outweigh costs; 11:1 cost/benefit ratio, based upon congestion relief, safety, and right of way (real estate) costs. This project is being built entirely within existing WSDOT right of way

Construction

We are doing our best to minimize the disruption that construction unavoidably causes. We are:

- coordinating all road closures
- consolidating road closures whenever possible
- providing advance information about closures
- coordinating with Washington State Patrol and assuring their presence in the work zone when needed
- coordinating with WSDOT Incident Response Teams and assuring their presence in the work zone when needed
- encouraging drivers to ride the bus, carpool, vanpool, work from home, flex their work schedules, bicycle, walk and more
- supporting transportation demand management programs and services

Accountable

- We are working to deliver the project on time and within budget and are providing regular and straightforward budget, schedule and construction updates, including closures, noise, etc.
- We are working to maintain community support. We are working closely with local communities and officials to ensure clear communication and access to information. For example, our design team engineers have already been meeting with adjacent businesses and neighborhoods to talk to them about the upcoming construction traffic and noise
- We are meeting or exceeding all technical and quality requirements for design and construction
- We will meet or exceed all environmental requirements with no permit violations

Team members and affiliations

Bruce Gray, Sound Transit
Hank Howard, Sound Transit
Lee Somerstein, Sound Transit
Dave Becher, WSDOT
Denise Cieri, WSDOT
Melanie Coon, WSDOT
Mike Cotten, WSDOT
Colleen Gants, WSDOT/PRR
Laura Johnson, WSDOT
Sarah Kavage, WSDOT
Jean Mabry, WSDOT
Brian Nielsen, WSDOT
Stan Suchan, WSDOT
Don Anderson, City of Kirkland

Communications Tools

Tool	Team lead	Due date
Coordination team logistics	Gants	ongoing
Project Web pages	Johnson, Gants	ongoing
Media outreach	MC, CG, LS	as needed
E-mail alerts (list serv)	LJ	April 05
Groundbreaking and milestone events	CG, LS	Summer 05
Open houses	Cieri/Gants/Nielsen	Winter 05
Policymaker construction notice	MC, CG, LS	as needed
Project briefing papers	LJ, CG	as needed
Variable message signs	LJ, CG, TSMC	as needed
Highway advisory radio	LJ, CG, TSMC	as needed
Construction press releases	LJ, CG, CTCO	as needed
Weekly construction update	LJ, CG, CTCO	as needed
Direct mail	MC, CG, LS	as needed
Employee transportation coordinators	Coon, Gants, Iwata	Spring 05
Specific outreach to business/retail groups	Cotten/Cieri?	
WSDOT intranet, internal e-mail	LJ, CG	as needed
24-hour noise hotline	Becher/Nielsen?	ongoing